

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 22

By Jackson

A RESOLUTION to honor the life and legacy of Joanna Burke.

WHEREAS, in expressing deep sorrow for the loss of a beloved member of our community, the elected representatives of the State of Tennessee wish to honor the memory of Joanna Burke, a person whose very life is, simply put, an inspiration to those left behind; and

WHEREAS, Joanna Burke was a person who selflessly devoted her life's work to the tender nurturing of others and she shall be remembered as a most remarkable human being; and

WHEREAS, this deeply spiritual and valiant person found her calling at a tender age and passionately and happily pursued it; and

WHEREAS, for eight years, Ms. Burke was a primary caregiver for The Elephant Sanctuary's herd of rescued Asian elephants in Hohenwald, Tennessee, working closely beside cherished friends and colleagues who describe her as a dedicated and dependable worker and an integral part of The Sanctuary's development and function; and

WHEREAS, as The Sanctuary's first paid employee, Ms. Burke lovingly cared for the elephants and taught others to appreciate the sacredness of all living things; her altruistic love is permanently woven into the fabric of The Elephant Sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, in a tragic accident involving an elephant, Winkie, Ms. Burke was accidentally killed by the very being she was caring for; and

WHEREAS, in upholding their daughter's personal beliefs and philosophy, Ms. Burke's parents, Paul and Carol Burke, along with brother Mark Burke, expressed no malice toward Winkie after the accident, but instead chose to have the elephant managed in a way that will keep others out of harm's way; and

WHEREAS, in further testament to Ms. Burke's values, her family honored her wishes by having her buried on Sanctuary grounds; and

WHEREAS, a funeral service was held in Hohenwald, followed by "A Gathering to Celebrate Joanna's Life" at Meriwether Lewis Park, where she loved to hike and be in the natural world; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the valiant, values-driven, and deeply spiritual life of this remarkable human being who walked in harmony with creation's beauty; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor the memory and commend the legacy of Joanna Burke, a person for whom life was an adventure and a gift and for whom the need to care for others, particularly her adored elephants, was her life's calling.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Ms. Burke lived her heart's desire and was a blessing to all who knew her, and her soaring spirit can be best remembered with a quote by Philip Thatcher: "Ask not what the world needs. Ask rather what makes your heart sing and go do that; for what the world needs is people with hearts that sing."

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.